



# Department of Justice

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## **HEAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL PLEADS GUILTY TO IMMIGRATION FRAUD CONSPIRACY**

### ***Songwoo Shim Obtained Fraudulent Certification for School and Then Used School to Issue Fraudulent Immigration Documents to Unlawful Aliens***

ATLANTA, GA - SONGWOO SHIM, 47, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal district court to conspiracy to encourage and induce aliens to reside unlawfully in the United States, to manufacture fraudulent immigration and government identification documents, and to make false statements under oath on applications submitted to the Department of Homeland Security, Student and Exchange Visitors Program.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This defendant quickly pleaded guilty, and for good reason. The investigation clearly showed that he fraudulently obtained approval from the Department of Homeland Security to operate an English language school, by submitting an application that contained false statements and that was supported by fraudulent documents. Then he used the school as a front for his real business: manufacturing and selling fraudulent immigration documents to dozens of so-called 'students,' most of whom never attended the school, and who were not legally entitled to remain in the United States. Now he will face federal prison."

Kenneth Smith, Special Agent in Charge of ICE's Office of Investigations in Atlanta said, "ICE strives to protect the integrity of our immigration system from those who attempt to abuse it by detecting and dismantling these fraud schemes. Disrupting these types of operations is crucial to stopping dangerous criminals and even potential terrorists from fraudulently entering the U.S. and obscuring their identities. ICE is committed to continue working with its law enforcement partners to identify arrest and prosecute those who violate our laws. Those who engage in illegal activity should know that we will hold them accountable for their actions."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: SHIM submitted a fraudulent I-17 petition to the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), supported by letters

supposedly issued by three educational institutions of higher learning. SEVP is the DHS program that provides approval and oversight to schools authorized to enroll nonimmigrant students. Non-accredited educational institutions seeking SEVP certification must submit letters from three institutions that are accredited by the United States Department of Education stating that the institutions have accepted transfer credits unconditionally on behalf of the students. The three letters submitted by SHIM in support of the I-17 petition for HLLC were forged or fraudulently obtained without the knowledge of the accredited institutions that supposedly issued the letters. In July 2006 DHS awarded SEVP-approved status to Humana Language Learning Center in Duluth, which SHIM managed and operated, based on the fraudulent I-17 petition he submitted.

After SHIM fraudulently obtained SEVP certification for Humana Language Learning Center, he and other individuals acting in concert with him, or at his direction, began facilitating the issuance of F-1 student visas to foreign-born individuals who were not eligible for those visas. Shim, or persons acting at his direction, manufactured and provided false documents, including resumes, school transcripts, diplomas, financial plans and statements, and I-94 forms, to the aliens to be used in support of applications for F-1 nonimmigrant student status. Shim maintained document labs with computer equipment and files, first in an apartment in Alpharetta and then at an apartment in Duluth, where the fraudulent documents were manufactured. Although Humana Language Learning Center reported to DHS that it had enrolled hundreds of students, the vast majority of the aliens who obtained F-1 status never attended Humana Language Learning Center. SHIM charged the aliens thousands of dollars, purportedly as “tuition” payments, but actually for the fraudulent documents he provided them for the purpose of obtaining F-1 status.

SHIM was indicted in April 2009. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States. He could receive a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Sentencing is scheduled for August 10, 2009, at 2p.m., before United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, assisted by other law enforcement agencies in the Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorneys Teresa D. Hoyt and Stephen H. McClain are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).